

PORINGLAND DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE MINISTRY

1. Within our two churches there exists a special ordained ministry amongst a diversity of forms of ministerial service. The service of God and of mankind is the hallmark of every Christian who seeks to follow the example of Jesus. Of more specific ways of service some are undertaken on private initiative while others, such as those of catechists and lay missionaries, may receive a mandate from ecclesiastical authorities. The special ordained ministry can only be rightly understood within this broader context.

MINISTRIES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

2. The church, in obedience to its Lord, is called to be faithful to its origin. (It) began with the communities where the apostles exercised their ministry. Although it is difficult to deduce from the New Testament's use of 'apostle' for the Twelve, Paul and others a precise portrait of an apostle, yet two primary features of the apostolate are discernible: a relationship with Jesus Christ and a mission from him to the church and the world (Mark 3:14). These features are to be maintained in the church through the Spirit. Conformity with apostolic teaching and life is the basic criterion for the church's fidelity to its Lord.

3. Just as the life of the church is expressed in innumerable ways in a variety of situations, so the gifts of ministry are infinitely diverse. Externally they are concerned with the proclamation of the gospel and seek to bring men into the fellowship of Christ's people and so under his rule of love. They also demonstrate the divine compassion toward mankind and God's concern for justice in the affairs of men. Internally these ministries are concerned with the worship of God and the church's spiritual health, which demand loyalty to apostolic doctrine and a life in Christ which involves mission to the world. All ministry is ultimately for the glory of God. The rôle of the special ministry within the church's fellowship is a co-ordination of these varied functions, the initiation and promotion

of what is necessary for the church's life and mission, and the exercise of a discerning judgment.

#### THE CO-ORDINATING MINISTRY

4. Every community requires some focus of leadership to ensure its integration. The church is no exception. To be the kind of community that he intends God willed both the end and the means. Moreover, since a diversity of spiritual gifts is evidence of vitality, the more dynamic a church proves to be the greater becomes the need for oversight (episcopate). This is precisely the task of the special ministry which God provides for co-ordinating the life of the church of Christ the servant.

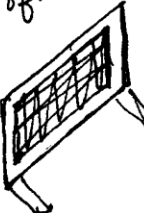
5. In the New Testament a variety of images is used to describe the qualities and functions of this co-ordinating minister. He is servant, both of Christ and of the church. As herald and ambassador he is an authoritative representative of Christ who proclaims his message of reconciliation. As a teacher he explains and applies the Word of God to the community. As a shepherd he exercises pastoral care and guides the flock. He is a steward who may only provide for the household of God what belongs to Christ. He is to be an example both in holiness and in compassion. By the very nature of the Body of Christ it is not in the purpose of God that one man should be endowed with all the gifts. The special minister is to be a focus of unity, co-ordinating and promoting the full diversity of the church's life, while at the same time using whatever special gift he may have received.

#### VOCATION TO THE SPECIAL MINISTRY

6. The Gospel assures us that Christ and his Spirit will never forsake the Church. The New Testament evidence shows that from the beginning the Holy Spirit called men to exercise an oversight within the church. (Consequently we have the assurance that the provision of this special ministry is part of God's design for his people in every age. There is no clear

blueprint for this oversight in the New Testament, though the main lineaments are traceable there. 'Bishops' and 'presbyters' were interchangeable terms. The contingencies of history necessitated a variety of ways in which this oversight was expressed. The threefold ministry was taking shape by the beginning of the second century, but it must be understood as one ministry historically diversified. The essential element in this special ministry is that of oversight (episcope).

7. Just as the original apostles did not choose themselves but were chosen and commissioned by Jesus, so these special ministers do not choose themselves but are called by the risen Lord in the church and through the church. Not only is their vocation from Christ but their qualification for exercising such a ministry is the gift of the Spirit: "Our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3: 4-6). They are placed in a new relationship of responsibility to Christ and his church.

*taken here  
of.*  


THE SPECIAL MINISTER AND THE  
RECONCILING WORK OF CHRIST

8. The reconciliation of men to God and in Christ to each other was accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the response of faith it is realised in the life of the church. The continuing mission of the church is to proclaim this reconciliation in Christ and to manifest his reconciling love. The central act of worship is the eucharist, the memorial of that reconciliation and the nourishing of the church's life for the fulfilment of its mission. Consequently the co-ordinating ministry is the one appropriate source from which is chosen the one who presides at the celebration of the eucharist.

9. ~~But~~ not only is there a necessity for a co-ordination of the life of the church in a given locality. It is necessary to be assured that this church is one with its historical origin and with the universal church. Ordination is a sign of continuity with the past and of universality in the present. In our two churches oversight is primarily associated with

the bishop. When a person is to be ordained bishop, bishops of other churches lay hands upon him as they request the gift of the Spirit for his ministry and receive him into their ministerial fellowship. Because they are the overseers of other churches they signify, by their participation in his ordination, that this new bishop and his church are within the communion of local churches, that is to say the universal church. Moreover, because they are bishops of churches rooted in the teaching of the apostles and faithful to it, their participation also indicates the historical continuity of this church and its bishop with the original apostolic community. The communion of the churches in faith and holiness, transcending the limitations of time and space, is thus maintained in the bishop. In all this are comprised the essential features of what our churches mean by ordination in the apostolic succession. In the local church presbyters and deacons are associated by their ordination with this responsibility of the bishop in oversight. Ordination in our two churches is unrepeatable. Traditionally the main tasks of this ministry have been the preaching and exposition of the gospel, pastoral care and the administration of the sacraments.

10. As early as Ignatius, at least in some churches, the man exercising these functions presided at the eucharist and no other could preside without his consent (Smyrn. 8:1). Because the eucharist is the memorial of the sacrifice of Christ, its minister bears a special relation to the sacrificial act of Jesus our High Priest. Thus the church saw the priestly rôle of Christ reflected in him and used priestly terms in describing him. Nevertheless in the faith of our churches the priestly sacrifice of Jesus was unique, as is also his continuing High Priesthood. Moreover in the New Testament ministers are never called 'priests'. Even though they share through baptism in the royal priesthood of the people of God (I Pet. 2:9), their ministry does not derive from this. It exists to serve the whole church for the good of mankind and the glory of God.